

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for ordering inbound inquiries, the method comprising:

receiving plural inbound inquiries, each inbound  
5 inquiry having associated inquiry information;  
applying a model to the inquiry information to  
determine a priority value for each inquiry; and  
ordering the inbound inquiries with the priority  
values.

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2. The method of Claim 1 wherein the method inquiries comprise e-mail messages.

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3. The method of Claim 1 wherein the method inquiries comprise instant messages.

4. The method of Claim 1 wherein the inbound inquiries comprise inbound telephone calls having associated caller information.

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5. The method of Claim 4 wherein the caller information comprises automatic number identification information.

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6. The method of Claim 4 wherein the caller information comprise destination number identification information.

7. The method of Claim 4 further comprising:  
gathering the caller information with a voice  
response unit.

5 8. The method of Claim 4 further comprising:  
associating demographic information with each  
inbound telephone call based on the caller information of  
the inbound call; and  
applying the model to the caller information to  
10 determine the priority value for each telephone call.

9. The method of Claim 4 wherein the model  
predicts caller behavior.

15 10. The method of Claim 9 wherein the priority  
value comprises a probability that the telephone call  
will result in a purchase.

11. The method of Claim 9 wherein the priority  
20 value comprises a probability that the caller associated  
with the telephone call will terminate the call after a  
hold time.

12. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:  
25 developing plural models from a history of inbound  
inquiries to forecast plural outcomes that determine the  
priority value.

13. The method of Claim 12 wherein developing the model further comprises:

applying regression analysis to the history to calculate the priority value.

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14. The method of Claim 12 further comprising:  
determining the outcomes of the plural inbound inquiries; and

updating the history with the outcomes of the plural  
10 inbound inquiries.

15. The method of Claim 12 wherein developing the caller model further comprises:

updating the model with the updated history.  
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16. A method for determining inbound telephone call priority, the method comprising:

- developing one or more models from a history of inbound calls, the history having caller information and outcome results from inbound telephone calls;
- applying the model to caller information of a pending inbound call to predict an outcome of the pending inbound call; and
- associating a priority with the pending inbound call, the priority based on the predicted outcome.

17. The method of Claim 16 wherein the caller information comprises telephony information received with the pending inbound call.

18. The method of Claim 17 wherein the telephony information comprises automatic number identification information.

19. The method of Claim 17 wherein the telephony information comprises destination number identification information.

20. The method of Claim 17 wherein the caller information further comprises account information, the method further comprising:

obtaining account information for the pending inbound call, the account information stored in a database by association with the telephony information.

21. The method of Claim 17 wherein the telephony information further comprises information input by the caller through a voice response unit.

5        22. The method of Claim 21 further comprising:  
         obtaining account information for the pending  
         inbound call based on the telephony information.

23. The method of Claim 16 wherein developing a  
10    model further comprises:  
         using the caller information as predictive variables  
         that model outcome results.

24. The method of Claim 23 wherein the model  
15    comprises a logistic regression model.

25. The method of Claim 23 wherein the model  
      comprises a linear regression model.

20       26. The method of Claim 16 further comprising:  
         placing the pending inbound call in the queue of an  
         automatic call distribution system in an order based on  
         the priority of the pending inbound call.

25       27. The method of Claim 26 wherein the predicted  
         outcome comprises a purchase resulting from the pending  
         inbound call.

28. The method of Claim 26 wherein the predicted outcome comprises the hold time of the pending inbound call.

5           29. The method of Claim 16 wherein associating a priority further comprises optimizing the order for the inbound telephone calls.

10           30. The method of Claim 29 wherein optimizing the order comprises solving a constrained optimization problem using one or estimates from one or more models.

15           31. The method of Claim 29 wherein optimizing further comprises maximizing agent productivity to minimize caller attrition.

20           32. The method of Claim 29 wherein optimizing further comprises maximizing agent productivity to produce sales.

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33. A system for scheduling inbound calls, the system comprising:

5 a receiving device operable to receive plural inbound inquiries and to provide the inbound inquiries to one or more agents;

10 a scheduling module interfaced with the receiving device, the scheduling model operable to order the inbound inquiries for handling by the receiving device, the order based in part on the predicted outcome of the inbound inquiries.

34. The system of Claim 33 wherein the inbound inquiries comprise inbound telephone calls.

15 35. The system of Claim 33 wherein the receiving device comprises an automatic call distribution system.

20 36. The system of Claim 33 wherein the receiving device comprises a server that supports voice over internet protocol.

37. The system of Claim 33 wherein the receiving device comprises a voice response unit.

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38. The system of Claim 34 further comprising:  
an inbound call history data base operable to store  
outcome results and caller information from plural  
completed inbound calls; and

- 5 a modeling module interfaced with the history  
database and operable to model inbound call outcomes from  
the stored outcome results and caller information.

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~~39.~~ A system for responding to inbound calls, the system comprising:

a telephone call receiving device interfaced with a network to receive plural inbound calls; and

5 a scheduling system associated with the receiving device and having a scheduling module that prioritizes the inbound calls in accordance with forecasted outcomes for the inbound calls;

10 wherein the scheduling system places one or more inbound calls on hold and then releases the inbound call from hold based on the priority of the inbound call.

40. The system of Claim 39 wherein the telephone call receiving device comprises an automatic call  
15 distribution system that incorporates the scheduling system.

41. The system of Claim 39 wherein the scheduling system forecasts outcomes with a model derived from a  
20 history of inbound calls.

42. The system of Claim 39 wherein the scheduling system orders the inbound calls to optimize an objective function.

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43. The system of Claim 42 wherein the objective function comprises agent productivity to minimize inbound call attrition.

44. A method for ordering inbound inquiries, the method comprising:

receiving plural inbound inquiries, from plural inquiry media, each inbound inquiry having associated inquiry information;

applying the inquiry information to one or more models to determine a priority value for each inquiry; and

ordering the inbound inquiries with the priority values.

45. The method of Claim 44 wherein the plural media comprise telephone calls and e-mail messages.

46. The method of Claim 45 wherein the plural media further comprise instant messages.

47. The method of Claim 45 wherein the plural media further comprise voice of internet protocol.

48. The method of Claim 44 further comprising: scheduling one or more inbound inquiries for an outbound contact attempt at a time based on the priority of the inbound inquiry.

49. The method of Claim 48 further comprising: informing the inbound inquirer of the time of the outbound contact attempt.

